being used in traditional systems, or those which are commercially exploited. A fourth gene bank has been recently established at Regional Research Laboratory (RRL), Jammu to cover North-Western Himalayan regions including the State of Himachal Pradesh. Thousands of accessions of important medicinal and aromatic plant species are being maintained in field of gene banks, seed banks, in vitro banks, DNA bank and in cryobank of these gene banks. The Department of Biotechnology has recently sanctioned two projects on: (a) Domestication, of endangered medicinal plant species of Himachal Pradesh at Y.S. Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry, Solan and (b) Development of data base on plant resources in the State of Himachal Pradesh at the Institute of Himalayan Bioresources Technology, Palampur under the auspices of the National Bioresource Development Board. A Centrally Sponsored scheme of Non-Timber Forest Produce including medicinal plants is being implemented by National Afforestration and Eco-Development Board (NAEB) throughout the country including Himachal Pradesh. The scheme is confined mainly to degraded forest areas. During 2000-2001, a project has been sanctioned for regeneration of perennail herbs and shrubs of medicinal value in Himachal Pradesh with a physical target of 100 ha. for the Ninth Plan.

Research in Human Embryonic Stem Cells

737. SHRI R.P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the details of Indian laboratories/institutions in the forefront of research in human embryonic stem cells and the present status of the specific research projects undertaken by them;

(b) the guidelines and regulations laid down for such research in the country and safeguards provided to prevent possible commercialisation of human embryo;

(c) the proposals cleared, if any, for Government funding of such projects; and

(d) the legal framework created for foreign collaborations and for funding by foreign countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT): (a) Indian laboratories/institution in the forefront of research in human embryonic stem cells are Reliance Life Sciences, Mumbai (a subsidiary of Reliance Industries) and National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bangalore. Reliance Life Sciences has developed seven stem cell lines. These cell lines have potential to differentiate into various organs. The National Centre for Biological Sciences has embryonic stem cells. Efforts are being made to develop stem cell lines.

(b) Policies and guidelines have been formulated through interministerial consultations covering ethical and commercial issues.

(c) No specific research proposal on embryonic stem cell research has so far been funded. However, Department of Biotechnology has supported research programmes on limbal stem cell, neuronal stem cell and haematopoitic stem cell to L.V. Prasad Eye Institute, Hyderabad, National Brain Research Centre, New Delhi and Christian Medical College, Vellore, respectively.

(d) At present, there is no legal framework for International collaboration on stem cell research. There are guidelines being followed for joint research proposals. Many of the related issues are under discussion keeping in view the national interest, rules and regulations.

Winding up of Indian Iron and Steel company

738. SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE:
SHRIMATI CHANDRA KALA PANDEY:

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether a show-cause notice for winding up of IISCO has been issued by BIFR;

(b) whether the hearing of the same is being held on 23rd November, 2001;